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The scientific men write bhoora (lord), the Burman pronounces the word pāyah; tsit-tshay (ghost) is a formidable way of reproducing the spoken tāsay; pa-nya (learning) but inadequately represents the sound of pyinya; khwon (taxes) is a startling, not to say puzzling, way of suggesting the sound kohn. The matter is made none the easier by the difficulty of finding an English equivalent at all for some Burmese sounds. In the words nyaung, pyouk, gyi, and the like, the *y* belongs to the preceding letter, and has always the consonantal and never the vowel sound. Such words are therefore invariably monosyllables. Again, the nou'pyit sound, which I have written *é* on the analogy of the French *mère*, has as a final vocable no equivalent in English. *Errant* gives the force as an initial letter. The scientific form of *eh* is certainly misleading. The initial *ky* is a great crux to beginners in Burmese. It requires a fine ear to catch the precise sound. An English officer will call for his clerk, Maung Poh Chè, and the punkah-boy will pass on the word for Maung Poh Kyè—tyè it might almost be written. But it is little use multiplying instances. Suffice it to add that a final consonant is always silent—strangled is almost a literal translation of the Burmese word.

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Of published works on Burma I have found those of Colonel Yule, Captain Forbes, and Dr. Bastian most valuable in supplying hints as to those of the national customs most likely to be interesting to foreigners. Had Captain Forbes's life been prolonged this book would probably have had no *raison d'être*.

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In conclusion, I have only to record my indebtedness to the Rev. Dr. Marks, the head of the S.P.G. in Burma. For over twenty years he has laboured in Burma both as a teacher and a missionary, and there is no Burman in the

FIRST YEARS

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Those born on Saturday have T, Ht, D, Dh, and N. The aspirated and unaspirated letters have to most English men precisely the same sound, though a practised ear detects the difference immediately. Examples are:—Maung Ba Tu, Mr. Like His Father; Ma Ne Htun, Miss or Mrs. Sunshine; Maung Du Wun, Mr. Pole Star; Mi Nu, Miss Tender.

Those born on Thursday select from P, Hp, B, Hb, and M. For example:—U Po Mya, Old Grandfather Emerald; Maung Bo Gale, Mr. Little Officer; Ma Hmwe, Miss or Mrs. Fragrant; Mi Meit, Miss Affection.

Wednesday has L and W. Examples:—Maung Ho, Mr. Yonder; Ma Waing Hla, Miss or Mrs. All-Round Pretty; Ma Hein, Miss or Mrs. Growler.

From noon till midnight on Wednesday is represented as a special day, or, at any rate, under a special constellation called Yahu, and those born between those hours have the alternative of the two Y's, one of which is sounded R in Pali and by the Arakanese. Examples are:—Maung Yo, Mr. Honesty; Ma Yon, Miss or Mrs. Rabbit, U Yauk, Old Individual.

Friday has Th and H. Examples:—Maung Than, Mr. Million; Maung Thet She, Mr. Long Life; Ma Thin, Miss or Mrs. Learned; Mè Thaw, (old) Mrs. Noisy.

A is the only letter assigned to Sunday, but the combination with it of the symbol of any other vowel changes it to the sound of that vowel. For example:—Maung On, Mr. Cocoa-nut; Maung At Ni, Mr. Red Needle; Ma E, Miss Cold; Ma Eing Saung, Mrs. Housekeeper; U O, Old Pot.

A common popular belief is, that, according to the day of the week (or rather the constellation representing that day) on which a man is born, so will his character be. Thus a man's name discloses his probable characteristics to the superstitious.

A man born on Monday will be jealous; on Tuesday, honest; on Wednesday, short-tempered, but soon calm again, the characteristic being intensified under Yahu; on Thursday, mild; on Friday, talkative; on Saturday, hot-tempered and quarrelsome; on Sunday, parsimonious.

Not only has every day its special character and its fixed

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CHAPTER LX

THE LANGUAGE

193 THE Burmese language is monosyllabic, and is therefore,
194 like all the other monosyllabic languages, forced into the
tonic system on account of the limited number of combinations of which the consonants admit. The multitude of meanings which a slight difference of accentuation gives to an otherwise identical sound is the greatest difficulty which a stranger has to contend with in studying the language, and never fails to land the beginner in a most embarrassing maze of complications. The modulations of the voice which European nations employ only to express astonishment, disbelief, interrogation, and alarm, become in Burmese and other Indo-Chinese tongues a means for distinguishing between words of different meaning; and this peculiarity offers particular difficulties to the phlegmatic, monotonous-voiced Englishman. It does not simplify matters that Burmese is, of all these languages, the softest and most pliable, and has therefore received the title of the Italian of the Far East. The varying cadence of the sounds produces to the ear the semblance of a chant, and all the people seem to speak in a kind of rhythm, so that as long as a man has ideas, it is not a very difficult matter to compose *linga*. But this only renders it more puzzling to the Occidental, and accounts for the fact that very few Englishmen learn Burmese, and still fewer speak it well. Of the mercantile community not one in fifty has any knowledge of Burmese at all; and the civil officers, who have to pass examinations before they get promotion, are but poor hands in conversation. The chief reason of this is, of course, that the European is accustomed

to learn by the eye, while the Burman learns almost entirely by ear, and the language is correspondingly affected. The semi-civilised man has a gift for catching faint distinctions of sound; and a modulation hardly perceptible to the European is enough to give to the Burman an entirely new meaning to the word. Fortunately the grammar is of the easiest possible character, and there is an extensive written literature, so that recourse may be had to the system of learning by the eye; but this only produces book scholars, and without a knowledge of the pronunciation it is impossible to appreciate the smooth flow of the dramatic metres. Individual sentences, too, may be clear enough, and the immediate connection of subordinate ideas with the leading thought is a great help, but longer compositions can often only be understood by a careful collating of the whole meaning, when once reading aloud would make the whole idea perfectly evident to a Burman.

One of the principal features in the language is the arrangement of words in a sentence, which, as is the case also in Thibetan, is the exact reverse of the order followed in English. This is the more singular and significant to the philologist, because the surrounding Shans, Talaings, and Karens observe practically the same sequence as in English. Another peculiarity is in the nouns, adjectives, and tenses of verbs, which are all formed by the addition of suffixes or affixes to the verbal root. Passive verbs are in very many cases transformed into the active form by the aspiration of the initial consonant, and transitives from intransitives in the same way; as *kya-thi*, to fall; *hkya-thi*, to throw down, or cause to fall; *pyet-thi*, to be ruined; *hpyet-thi*, to bring to ruin; *lut-thi*, to be free; *hlut-gyi*, to set free. The language is written from left to right, and there are no spaces between the words, and but very few *paik*, or stops, to mark separate sentences, except the *paik-gyi* which divides paragraphs, and consists of four short perpendicular lines arranged in couples. The written characters are, all but one or two, composed of circles, or segments of circles, having acquired that shape from the original Nagari, by the custom of writing with a pointed style on palm leaves. The alphabet is derived from

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the Magadhi or Pali (the latter word properly meaning a text and not a language), and was doubtless imported into Burma with the teachings of Buddhism. The monosyllabic character of the language has, however, considerably changed the sound of many of the letters. There are ten vowels and thirty-two consonants, every alternate vowel having the sound of that preceding it, but considerably longer and broader in tone. The consonants are divided into groups of gutturals, palatals, cerebrals, dentals, and labials, with five liquids, a sibilant pronounced *sh*, and an aspirate. In each class there are five letters; the first the simple sound, the second its aspirate, the third the sound rough and hard, the fourth its aspirate, and the fifth the corresponding nasal. The letters of the alphabet have all names descriptive of their shapes, beginning with *ka-gyi* and *ka-gwe*, "great *ka*" and "curved *ka*." Some of the names are singular; "big-bellied *ta*," "elephant shackles *hta*," "bottom indented *da*," "steep *pa*," "hump-backed *ba*," "bridle *za*," and "supine *ya*." The vowel *a* is inherent in every consonant, and is pronounced in every case, except when it is "killed" by the "that" mark, when the consonant itself is also killed, and the effect produced is a short, sharp, abrupt termination to the word, as if the letter were strangled in the attempt to pronounce it.

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A peculiarity which Burmese shares with all the other cognate tongues is the use of help words in counting—"nouns generic" as they have been called. One cannot say in Burmese, as in English, "two dogs," "four spears," "three trees," and so forth. It is requisite to mention first the thing spoken of; second, the number or quantity of objects; and finally, the genus, or class to which they belong. Thus *kwe hni-gaung*, dogs, two animals, or two dogs; *hlan le-sin*, spears, four long, straight things; *on-bin thon-bin*, coconut palms, three trees, and so forth. The cardinal is not placed in immediate juxtaposition with the noun, but has the guiding word in between. There are a vast number of these generic nouns, and they come quite naturally to a Burman. He speaks of boxes and pots as so many "round things"; books and letters as "writings"; mats as "flat things"; horses and carts as "things to be ridden on";

coats and waistcloths as "things to be worn"; and so forth in infinite variety. Even the numeral auxiliaries applied to human beings vary. The Buddha, as well as superior beings and pagodas, is spoken of as a *ta-zu*; kings, members of the Sacred Order, and persons in power generally, are referred to as *ta-ba*; respectable people to whom it is wished to be polite are numbered as *ta-u* (so many "foreheads"); and in ordinary conversation, mankind generally are denominated *ta-yauk*. Foreigners—regarded as aliens and indeed not entitled to rank as human beings at all, since they have never worn the yellow robe—receive but scant reverence from the tongues of the older people, and formerly from Upper Burmans, the same auxiliary being applied to them as would be used in speaking of a buffalo or a pig. Thus you would say *kalā hni'-gaung*, foreigners, two animals, or "two beastly foreigners." This has, however, now almost died out, certainly in regard to Europeans, and is only occasionally heard with reference to some of the least civilised of the hill tribes. A hint of the same style of enumeration occurs in the English "twenty head of cattle," and perhaps in the military "five hundred sabres," or "two thousand bayonets," where the weapon is more typical and perhaps of greater value than the man who wields it.

Chinese and Shan perhaps exceed the Burman language in the number of almost identically sounding syllables, in which the slightest difference of intonation makes a change of sense, but most people are of opinion that it is quite rich enough. Thus *pe* in its simple form may mean (1) the palmyra palm or leaf, whence *pe-sa*, a palm-leaf book; (2) an anvil; (3) to have the edge or point turned; (4) to lay the ears back, as a horse; (5) to be dull of sight, or blunted in feelings; (6) to be dirty; (7) an euphonic verbal affix.

Pe, with the heavy accent (denoting a lengthening of the sound) means to give, and *pe-sa* in this form, to give in marriage.

Hpe, with the heavy accent (practically the same sound to an Englishman's ears) means (1) to scab over; (2) to ward off evil; (3) to tack off shore with a boat in order to gain an offing; (4) to be broken down in bodily strength or ability.

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Pè with the light accent (cutting the sound short) means (1) the stern of a boat; (2) to steer; (3) to be broken off, to crumble. Pè, with the heavy accent, means (1) a measure of weight equal to six seeds of the *Abrus precatorius*; (2) any leguminous plant, such as bears seed in a pod, of which there are many varieties, including a pè-sa; (3) to put aside, reject; (4) madam, a familiar term applied by men to their intimate female friends; (5) a square measure of ground; (6) one of the four states of punishment. The last three usually have a- prefixed to them.

Hpè, with the light accent, means (1) to break off, as a small piece from a larger; (2) to separate and take a different course.

Hpè, with the heavy accent, means (1) satin; (2) a playing card, hpè-sa hpè-kye meaning to have shifting luck; (3) to get out of the way; (4) to remove. Kye hpè, derived from this, means to be splay-footed.

Thus we have nearly thirty separate meanings for a syllable which in rapid speaking seems, to an unpractised ear, to have throughout the same sound. This is philologically interesting, but practically it spoils the temper.

Myin means to see, high, and a horse; and to translate the sentence "I saw a high horse," and read the same aloud, is a good test of the knowledge of the arrangement of words, of the accent, and of the power of appreciating delicacies of pronunciation.

There are not very many Englishmen who can properly appreciate the difference in sound between kyaung, a cat, and kyaung, a monastery. They are apt to lose their temper when the lesson is many times repeated. Hundreds of other instances might be given, but they would only tire and perhaps frighten off those who do not know the language, and would certainly irritate those who have begun the study of it.

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It is a common saying that you cannot pronounce Burmese properly till you take to betel-chewing. This may be called smart, or flippant rather than true. It is, however, undeniable that the practice of chewing renders it very much more difficult to catch the sound of a word. The result appears in the grotesque names which have been given to

BURMESE MUSIC.

Part III

Notes on Time.

There remains the question of Burmese musical time. Both Mr. Mariano and Paul Edmonds wrote with enthusiasm on the strictness with which Burmese musicians kept time. Very few among Burmans do not know how to keep the tiny bell (*si* 8i) and clapper (*wah* o'i) going correctly when music is playing. A foot or a hand of listeners and players alike may often be seen beating time. That may be partly because we as a race find it impossible to hear music with stolid immobility. Partly, however, it is because our language is not accentual but tonal.....

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Rhythm in a language such as English is largely dependent upon differences of emphasis or accent upon the syllables in a word, and the words in a sentence. Differences of emphasis or accent do occur in Burmese, but not to the same extent; consequently emphasis or accent is not used very much, if at all, in the composition of Burmese verse.

Burmese verse depends rather upon the schematic arrangement of words with certain sounds recurring at fixed points. That is, Burmese verse has rhyme, but it has little or no accentual rhythm. On the other hand timing, especially such as depends upon the number of syllables pronounced in a given period and caesuras that mark the period are of greater importance in Burmese than in English. In Burmese singing the caesuras are even more important than the sets of syllables or words in each measure. See, the rests on the first beat of measures 1 to 8 (Example 11 Voice)¹.

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The singer keeps time with a pair of tiny bells (*si* 8i) and a small clapper (*wa* o'i) in his hand. The 'clap' coincides with each of the rests mentioned till the final note of the section when it coincides with the tonic.

Simple duple or simple quadruple is the usual time. In the duple the bell (O) and the clapper (X) go alternately. In the quadruple there is a rest (—) on one or the other of the middle beats.

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1. Had Mariano known the significance of these rests, which often marked the beginning of bars, he would have discovered six such rests in his own notation of Nanthain-yodaya in bars 13, 15, 23, 27, 33 and 35. Make two of his bars equal one, and halve the value of all his notes, and all becomes right. In barring, I often found that western musicians mistakenly listened for the accented note. Accented notes in Burmese music do not mark the beginning of bars. They are merely emphasised or underlined notes. The caesuras are what should have been looked for. The Burmese equivalent of the strong beat at the beginning of bars is the beat, or rather the 'clap' of the clapper. See Example 11a.

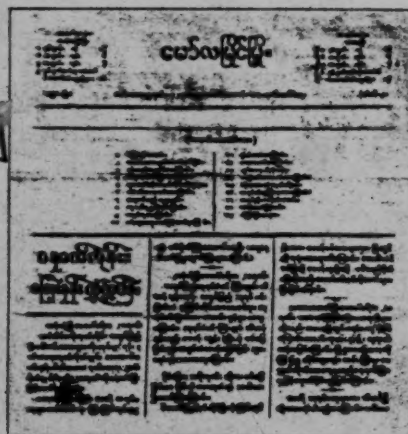
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APPENDIX B.

STRUCTURE OF THE BURMESE LANGUAGE—MODE OF
TRANSLITERATION.

212 THE Burmese alphabet is a model of classification. The vowels and consonants form separate orders, with sub-orders. The force of each letter is conveyed in its name. The name consists of two parts, the generic and the specific. The latter describes the form of the letter by its resemblance to some familiar object; for instance *sa-sinda*—elephant-fetter *sa* (so). Sentences are punctuated, but the words are written—from left to right—without separation. The horizontal line of characters consists mainly of the consonants, the characters added above and below the line denote the vowels. The Burmese is all Burmese just as German is all German. The

meaning of a compound word is as obvious as the meaning of *durch-sichtig* is in German and *trans-parens* is in Latin. A new root which one has learned in its function of substantive may be used as verb and adjective upon one unvarying model. The forms of speech have tended to preserve related ideas in the same categories as the terms expressing the ideas. The Burman has no equivalents for our "herb, shrub, tree." He speaks of "grain-plants, creeper-plants, timber-plants." The root idea is conveyed by a monosyllable. The disuse of mute consonants in the spoken language greatly reduces the number of available combinations of sounds by which to differentiate monosyllables. A tonic system of vowels and the aspiration of labial and dental as well as of liquid consonants, help to multiply the possible combinations. Context comes to the aid of these subtle distinctions. Prefixes and suffixes of universal application indicate the



465- BURMESE LETTERPRESS (NEWSPAPER, p. 134).

parts of speech in their syntax and their inflexions. The numeral affixes proper to various classes of objects are of a curious prolixity. Just as we say *pair, couple, brace*, so one of twenty or more different affixes has to be employed with the number, according to the nature of the object. Secondary meanings are obtained by a free compounding of words. The language possesses terms for ideas of much subtlety and complexity; but metaphysical terms are imported from the Pāli, the language of Buddhist philosophy. The pronunciation of the Pāli is adapted to that of the Burmese. Thus *Samanera* becomes *Chintheinānā*. Sanskrit, which is studied by few, presents still greater difficulties to the Burman. The word for Sanskrit is corrupted into *Thānthalayit*. The terseness of the language appears in its proverbs. For

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The terseness of the language appears in its Proverbs. 209

For instance, *Kuo-hle Ahale jhu mo-th*—"The dog-lea may jump but it raises no dust." Seven syllables as compared with the ten of the almost monosyllabic English. In the above sentence the order of ideas is much the same as our own. But as a rule the order is the opposite. "Fetch hither water to quench the fire" is *ad thaphe ye yag*, literally, "fire to quench, water fetch hither." The ideas are expressed in order of their practical importance. The checked tones of the Burmese language give it an abruptness which is reflected in the staccato of the Burmese music. But Burmese possesses sonorous qualities also, for instance, *Shwe Sandaw Payd, Shwe Payd*.

The sounds of the letters used in this work for transliterating Burmese words are as follows:—

Vowel-sounds.

a, ă, ı, ă, ă,	as in Italian
ə	" English <i>bell</i> (but long in quantity)
ai	" " <i>aïle</i>
au	" " <i>cow</i>
aw	" " <i>cow</i>
ei	" " <i>eight</i>
Consonants	" English, including the <i>ch</i> , omitting <i>f</i> , <i>v</i> , and <i>x</i> .

Few Burmans can pronounce *r*, and generally substitute *y* for it in the Pāli words. All final consonants are mute. They are not wholly suppressed as they are in French, but are merely checked in pronunciation. The Burmese for *demon* is written *naï* in this work, because it is too inconvenient to indicate the checked mute by such a form as *naï*. The final *n* should, strictly speaking, be always followed by a *g* or a suggestion of *g*, thus *dagdag* or *dagdag* instead of *dagda*. But to write it in this way is inconvenient in many of the combinations. This should accordingly be borne in mind. The combinative changes on the other hand which consonants undergo in certain positions have been incorporated in the spelling and not left to the reader to form. Instead of the current form *sit-hayla* (chess), which correctly renders the Burmese spelling of the word, the form *sippayla* is used, which renders the actual pronunciation. The letter *h* combined with *y* has a varying force according to its position. Thus *hya* is pronounced just as written, but in the duplicated form *hya-hya*, the pronunciation is *hya-dya*. There are a few exceptions such as *hah-hyl* (scissors) pronounced as spelled. When the *h* is aspirated, its combination with *y* gives *ch* (English *ch*) and *ch* (English *f*). *Kyung* (a monastery) is pronounced as written. In the compound *hau-kyung* it is pronounced *hau-kyung* (a forest monastery). But when it is in the aspirated *h*, *hau-kyung* makes *hau-kyung* (a forest stream). The modulation of the voice differentiates it further, thus *hau-kyung*, with the second syllable rounded up sharply (will cut). In deliberate utterance certain of these modifications disappear again; just as we



602. SADAUK (p. 361).

194 pronounce the article differently in deliberate and in rapid utterance. *Ka* in duplication becomes *ka-ga*, *sa* becomes *sa-ha*, *ta* becomes *ta-da*. Burmese words used within the English text have been inflected in the English way only when they have some currency in English, such as *Siam*, *Siamu*. A further difference is made by the rising tone corresponding to the rising modulation of English speech in asking a question, and the falling one in answering. The former has a parallel in the Swedish; the pronunciation of the Burmese *utthila* recalls that of the Swedish *Upsala*. On the other hand our interrogative modulation of voice has no significance in Burmese. The question is formed by the use of the interrogative particles, *la*, *re*. These are three quantities. *Wa* means bamboo; *sa* means cotton; *wa* means steel. Only the most salient of these distinctions have been embodied in the transliteration. Besides quantity, emphasis (stress) plays an important part. For instance, *fa-la* means cardamom; *fa-la* means a bowl. Where the stress lies on a diphthong, the accent has been placed on the first vowel, for typographical reasons. The accent ' is used to express emphasis in the case of vowels which are stressed but are not long. The pronunciation of Burmese depends a great deal on the correct intervals or "rests." These are partly indicated by the conjoining of the syllables, the hyphening and the separation. For instance *Sinbya-mya Shin* forms a single phrase, but the syllables have not all the same degree of cohesion. The hyphen has to be used in many cases where there is no rest, to simplify the reading and to preserve the right associations of consonants, such as in *Pha-ha, ha-nyin*. Finally the cadence of speech is most distinctive. The intervals favoured in Burmese music and the tones on which the phrases begin and end indicate certain of its features (Appendix C).

APPENDIX C.

NOTE ON BURMESE MUSIC, BY MR. P. A. MARIANO.

533 THE fundamental pitch-note of Burmese music corresponds to our A-natural. Three kinds of scales are used. The first is the Doric scale consisting of the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 8th intervals of the diatonic scale. The second is the diatonic scale; in the Burmese diatonic scale, however, the 7th is tuned flat by about a quarter tone. An instrument tuned in this way may sound out of tune to a good European ear, but most ears will scarcely perceive the difference. There are no flats or sharps in the Burmese gamut. Nevertheless, changes of key are not infrequent in their melodies. These invariably proceed from the tonic to the sub-dominant, but without the introduction of the 7th flat, as there is no regular system of counterpoint. Here the advantage of tuning the 7th somewhat flat is apparent, for it does duty as the 4th interval of the new key. A change from tonic to dominant sometimes also takes place. The third scale is a kind of minor; it consists of the same notes as the major diatonic scale, but it begins and ends with the third interval. Strict time is observed; two-four is the usual time.

Pure Burmese melodies are beautiful in themselves. But on account of the preponderance of grace-notes (*movimento*, *acciacatura*, *appoggiatura*) Europeans find it difficult to catch Burmese tunes. Not being able to eliminate the grace-notes from the simple theme, they do not appreciate genuine airs so much as they do the medley of catches of European and Indian music which is becoming the fashion. The "*Kayd-shan*" now played by the regimental bands as the Burmese National Anthem, is an example of this kind. It is made up of bits of bagpipe-calls (*Kayd*=bagpipe) and snatches of a polka.